

WE CLAIM:

1. A computerized method for interaction between a user and a virtual personality comprising the steps of:

- a) storing in a database data relating to a personality's responses to various inquiries;
- b) prompting a user to provide a speech comment directed to the personality;
- c) detecting the user's comment using speech recognition software;
- d) interpreting the user's comment as an inquiry based on natural language processing of the detected comment;
- e) processing the inquiry and the stored data in the computer to generate a personality response to the inquiry; and
- f) transmitting the response to the user in the personality's voice.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the user is prompted via telephone access, wherein the access is granted in response to use of a calling card device assigned to the user.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the user is prompted via use of a CD.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the user is prompted via use of a DVD.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the user is prompted via use of web pages delivered via the Internet or another communications network.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the user is prompted via the use of a wireless device.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the user is prompted via the use of a remote kiosk device.

8. A computer system for interactive communication between a user and a virtual personality comprising:

- a) means for storing in a database voice responses of a personality to inquiries;
- b) means for detecting a user's speech directed to the personality;
- c) means for interpreting the speech to formulate a user inquiry;

d) means for accessing in the database an appropriate personality voice response to the user inquiry; and

e) means for transmitting the personality voice response to the user.

9. The computer system of claim 8, further comprising:

5 a) means for determining if the user inquiry has a corresponding personality voice response stored in the database;

b) means for storing in a second database the voice responses of a host;

c) means for accessing the host voice responses in the second database if there is no corresponding personality voice response to the user inquiry; and

10 d) means for transmitting the host response to the user.

10. A method for creating a database of personality responses to commonly asked questions which comprises the steps of:

a) conducting one or more focus groups with members of the public to generate one or more sets of questions commonly asked of the personality;

15 b) recording an interview of the personality responding to one or more of the questions;

c) recording one or more voice samples of the personality;

d) storing the interview responses in a database in relation to the information requested by the corresponding questions; and

20 e) storing the voice samples in the database.

11. A computer readable media for directing at least one computer processor to perform the steps of:

a) storing in a database data relating to a personality's responses to various inquiries;

25 b) prompting a user to provide a speech comment directed to the personality;

c) detecting the user's comment using speech recognition software;

d) interpreting the user's comments as an inquiry based on natural language processing of the detected comment;

e) processing the inquiry and the stored data in the computer to generate a personality response to the inquiry; and

f) transmitting the response to the user in the personality's voice.

12. A computer-enabled entertainment network for interactive communication

5 between a user and a personality comprising:

a) means for storing in a database voice responses to inquiries by a personality;

b) means for identifying a user inquiry;

10 c) means for accessing in the database an appropriate voice response to the user inquiry; and

d) means for transmitting the voice response to the user.

13. The network of claim 12, wherein the means for transmitting the voice response to the user transmits the voice response as part of an audio-visual presentation of the personality.

15 14. The network of claim 12 or 13, further comprising means by which a user selects a personality to interact with from a plural set of personalities.

15. A computer-enabled method of transmitting information to a recipient comprising the steps of:

20 (a) providing means by which the recipient selects a personality from a plural set of personalities; and

(b) transmitting the information at least partly in the voice of the personality selected in step (a), to the recipient, via a communications medium or network.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of:

25 - providing means by which the recipient is able to select the type of information to be transmitted.

17. A computer-enabled system of transmitting information to a recipient comprising the steps of:

(a) personality selecting means by which the recipient selects a virtual

personality from a plural set of virtual personalities; and

(b) information transmitting means for transmitting the information to the recipient, via a communications medium or network, at least partly in the voice of a personality selected by recipient using the personality selecting means.

5 18. The system of claim 17, further comprising:

- information selecting means by which the recipient is able to select the type of information to be transmitted.

10 19. A method of interacting with a virtual personality comprising accessing, as a user, a system according to any one of claims 8, 9, 17 and 18, so that requested information is transmitted to the accessing user at least partly in the voice of the personality.